

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 220759 TOSEC 260149

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY NEA:ARDAY:TH

APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY (PER SECTO 26044)

NEA:ADUBS

P:PCHABIB

D:CWROBINSON (DRAFT)

S/S-ORMPERITO

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TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

INFO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 220759 TOSEC 260149

EXDIS - FOR AMBASSADORS FROM THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS, EG

SUBJECT: ISRAELI HARASSMENT OF AMOCO IN GULF OF SUEZ

1. WE DO NOT WANT TO ALLOW AMOCO ISSUE TO BE BLOWN OUT OF ALL PROPORTION, BUT BELIEVE WE MUST CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN OUR SUPPORT FOR AMOCO'S RIGHT TO DRILL. OUR POSITION MUST RELATE MAINLY TO THE RIGHTS OF AN AMERICAN COMPANY RATHER THAN TO THE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN DISPUTE OVER THE GULF. FINALLY, WE MUST CONTINUE TO LEAVE DECISIONS ABOUT MOVEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE AMOCO DRILL SHIP TO AMOCO, WHILE KEEPING THE COMPANY INFORMED OF THE SITUATION AS WE UNDERSTAND IT.

2. FOR AMBASSADOR TOON: YOU WERE RIGHT TO MAKE YOUR APPROACH TO ALLON IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES. HABIB HAS FOLLOW-

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 220759 TOSEC 260149

ED UP WITH DINITZ, AS YOU KNOW, IN THE WAKE OF THE FURTHER

HARASSMENT OF SEPTEMBER 4, AND I WOULD LIKE YOU NOW TO TALK OVER THE PROBLEM WITH RABIN TO SEE IF SOME PRACTICAL SOLUTION CANNOT BE FOUND, PERHAPS BUILDING ON THIS BEING A PRE-1967 AMOCO CONCESSION.

3. RUN THROUGH WITH RABIN THE TALKING POINTS YOU USED WITH ALLON. TELL HIM THAT WE WANT TO KEEP THIS PROBLEM IN PROPORTION BUT THAT WE DO VERY MUCH OBJECT TO HAVING AN

AMERICAN COMPANY TREATED IN THIS FASHION AND WE MUST CONTINUE TO INSIST ON THE COMPANY'S RIGHTS TO DRILL. THIS CONCESSION WAS GRANTED TO AMOCO IN 1964, AND AS IS CUSTOMARY THERE IS A DEADLINE BY WHICH THE COMPANY MUST DRILL OR LOSE IT. THE DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 21, 1976. AMOCO HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING FOR OVER A MONTH NOW TO COMMENCE DRILLING AND THUS IT IS NOT SOMETHING WE HAVE SUDDENLY CONFRONTED THE ISRAELIS WITH.

4. WE DO NOT ACCEPT ALLON'S ATTEMPT TO LINK OUR POSITION WITH AN EGYPTIAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST ISRAEL, AND WE RESENT THE ASSERTION THAT WE ARE PLAYING EGYPT'S GAME.

5. ALLON STATED THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT HARASS THE VESSEL BUT WOULD NOT MAKE THINGS EASY FOR IT. BY OUR DEFINITION, A GUNBOAT'S ORDER TO DEPART, DELIVERED TO AN UNARMED CIVILIAN VESSEL, IS HARASSMENT. THE FIRING ON THE BUOYS IS TOTALLY INEXPLICABLE IN THE FACE OF ALLON'S STATEMENT, AND WE HAVE PROTESTED IT. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE GOTTEN ONE STORY FROM JERUSALEM AND ANOTHER FROM THE COMMANDERS ON THE SCENE AND WE WOULD LIKE AN EXPLANATION.

6. ALL OF THIS HAVING BEEN SAID, THE QUESTION STILL REMAINS OF AVOIDING FUTURE DIFFICULTY BY FINDING SOME PRACTICAL SOLUTION. YOU SUGGESTED TO ALLON THAT ISRAEL PERMIT THE AMOCO VESSEL TO DRILL ON THE SITE WHILE CONTINUING TO PRESERVE THEIR POSITION THAT THE SITE IS UNDER ISRAELI JURISDICTION. WHILE WE DO NOT AGREE WITH THAT LEGAL POSITION, WE WILL NOT JOIN IN ANY EFFORT TO PORTRAY THE AMOCO DRILLING AS EVIDENCE THAT THE SITE LIES OUTSIDE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 220759 TOSEC 260149

ISRAELI JURISDICTION. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, ISRAEL DOES NOT CONTEST THE VALIDITY OF THE PRE-1967 CONCESSIONS SO THAT WHAT IS INVOLVED IS THE ISSUE OF DRILLING THERE NOW UNDER PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES. IT IS NOT PRACTICAL TO ASK AMOCO TO APPLY TO THE ISRAELIS FOR PERMISSION TO DRILL, HOWEVER. FOR ONE THING, THIS WOULD GIVE ACTIVE SUPPORT TO THE LEGAL POSITION WE DO NOT AGREE WITH. FOR ANOTHER, AMOCO IS OBVIOUSLY DEPENDENT ON THE EGYPTIANS

FOR MANY OTHER CONCESSION AREAS AND COULD NOT THEREFORE TAKE A STEP THAT WOULD BE STRONGLY OPPOSED BY THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT.

7. THE ISSUE WILL NOT ALLOW FOR DELAY UNTIL ALLON COMES TO THE U.S., AS HE SUGGESTED, NOR IS IT REALLY USEFUL, AS HE ALSO SUGGESTED, TO HAVE QUOTE EXPERTS UNQUOTE DISCUSS IT. WE NEED TO REACH SOME MODUS OPERANDI QUICKLY BEFORE, DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS, THE ISSUE BECOMES FAR MORE TROUBLESOME THAN IT SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO BE. WE NOTE

IN THIS CONNECTION THAT IT HAS BEGUN TO SEEP INTO THE ISRAELI PRESS, AND WE HOPE THIS CAN BE CONTAINED.

8. FOR AMBASSADOR EILTS: YOU SHOULD REAFFIRM WITH AMOCO AND THE EGYPTIANS THAT WE ARE CONTINUING TO PURSUE THE MATTER WITH THE ISRAELIS. TELL AMOCO THAT WE CONTINUE TO REGARD DECISIONS ABOUT DRILLING TO BE THEIRS TO MAKE, BUT WE WILL KEEP THEM INFORMED OF THE ISRAELI POSITION. AS OF NOW, WE WOULD OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO ASSUME THAT FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO SEND IN THE DRILLING RIG WOULD MEET ISRAELI INTERFERENCE AS IN PAST INCIDENTS. (FYI: WE DO NOT KNOW THE BASIS FOR THE MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT QUOTE FIRM ASSURANCES UNQUOTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT SEND GUNBOATS AGAIN.)

9. WHILE WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO TELL THE EGYPTIANS NOT TO SEND GUNBOATS OUT TO THE AREA, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY ARE OSTENSIBLY DOING SO TO PROTECT AMOCO AND NOT TO INTERFERE WITH IT, YOU SHOULD TRY TO GET THE POINT ACROSS TO THE EGYPTIANS THAT THE BASIS OF OUR EFFORT WITH THE ISRAELIS HAS TO BE THAT AMOCO, AS AN AMERICAN COMPANY, HAS A RIGHT TO DRILL ON THAT SITE, AND EGYPTIAN ACTIONS THAT

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 220759 TOSEC 260149

LEAD TO CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THEM AND ISRAEL OVER THE QUESTION REDUCE RATHER THAN ENHANCE THE CHANCES OF OUR MAKING THIS STICK. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE EGYPTIANS THINK THE ISRAELIS WILL BACK DOWN IF THE DRILLING RIG PERSISTS, BUT EXPERIENCE TO DATE SHOULD BE AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT THIS TACTIC WILL NOT WORK IN PRACTICE. ROBINSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HARASSMENT, OFFSHORE OIL FIELDS, EXPLORATORY DRILLING, PETROLEUM CONCESSIONS, GUIDANCE INSTRUCTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE220759
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ARDAY:TH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760337-0426
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760987/aaaacxfu.tel
Line Count: 160
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ISRAELI HARASSMENT OF AMOCO IN GULF OF SUEZ
TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, US, IS, EG, AMOCO
To: TEL AVIV CAIRO
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006